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Senator Dianne Feinstein

of California

Senate Approves Feinstein-Warner-Schumer Extension of Assault Weapons Ban March 2, 2004

Washington, DC – The U.S. Senate today approved extending the ban on military-style assault weapons, sponsored by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.).

The bipartisan legislation, also sponsored by Senators John W. Warner (R-VA) and Charles Schumer (D-NY) would extend the current ban on the manufacture and importation of 19 types of assault weapons (and many other by characteristic) by an additional 10 years. The ban will expire on September 13, 2004 unless Congress approves the new legislation and it is signed into law by President Bush.

“This is a tremendous day,” Senator Feinstein said. “It was an uphill battle, but it was a battle worth fighting. The NRA went all out to repeal this legislation, and we won. I feel exactly like I did in 1993. Once in a while, when you have something in which you deeply believe, and that something is made into law and sustained, it is so elating and so important.

I deeply believe that assault weapons don’t belong on the streets of our communities. The bill we drafted banned the manufacture and sale of assault weapons. It also banned the manufacture of the big clips, drums or strips, which make them so dangerous. The aim was to dry up the supply of these weapons over time -- and the ban has worked. It has reduced the proportion of banned weapons used in crime by two-thirds.

In the past few days, we’ve heard horror stories about the gun industry planning to put bayonet mounts and grenade launchers and flash suppressers back on the market again. This would have been terrible.

I want to thank all the Senators that voted for this amendment and all the cosponsors that helped secure victory. It would not have happened if we had not acted as a team.

I want to particularly thank Senator Warner. Senator Warner voted against the ban 10 years ago, but had the good judgment to see that the ban has worked, that law enforcement supports it, and to understand what would happen if this ban were repealed.

I also want to thank Senator Schumer. Senator Schumer was on the Judiciary Committee in the House when this came up in 1993. I asked him if he would take the bill that I had introduced and try to shepherd it through the House. He did that, which was no small accomplishment.

Now, the key is to keep the extension of the ban in the gun immunity bill. We should not go to conference on this bill, until there is a commitment that the assault weapons legislation will be part of a final gun immunity bill. We have a commitment from Minority Leader, Senator Daschle, to assure that that's the case.

The issue is now clearly joined, and I believe the overwhelming number of the American people want this assault weapons legislation continued for another ten years. At the end of the road, I hope that we will have achieved that."

Extension of the assault weapons ban enjoys broad support:

- **President Bush supports the extension of the ban:** In April 2003, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said of the assault weapons ban, "**The president supports the current law, and he supports reauthorization of the current law.**"
- **Extension of the ban is widely supported by gun owning and non-gun owning voters.** According to an October poll (sample size – 800) conducted for Americans for Gun Safety by Mark Penn, voters support renewing the ban by a margin of 77-21% (66-32% among voters who own guns).
- **Law enforcement organizations support the extension:**
 - Fraternal Order of Police
 - International Association of Chiefs of Police
 - The Major Cities Chiefs
 - The National Association of Police Organizations
 - The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement
 - The International Brotherhood of Police Officers
 - The Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association
 - The American Probation and Parole Association
- **The ban also has broad support in the community:**
 - National League of Cities
 - US Conference of Mayors
 - National Association of Counties
 - US Conference of Catholic Bishops
 - National Education Association
 - American Bar Association
 - NAACP
 - Americans for Gun Safety
 - Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence United with the Million Mom March
 - Church Women United
 - Episcopal Church, USA
 - American Academy of Family Physicians
 - American Public Health Association
 - Family Violence Prevention Fund
 - National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 - National Network to End Domestic Violence
 - National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
 - National Association of Social Workers

- Physicians for a Violence Free Society
- American Association of Suicidology
- Mothers Against Violence in America
- Child Welfare League of America
- Alliance for Justice

Legislation to reauthorize the assault weapons ban is cosponsored by Senators Mike DeWine (R-OH), Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), Carl Levin (D-MI), Christopher Dodd (D-CT), James Jeffords (I-VT), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Jack Reed (D-RI), Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD).

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